

Freedom vs Security Documents: Understanding 9/11

Document 1

On September 11, 2001, 19 militants associated with the Islamist extremist group al Qaeda hijacked four airliners and carried out suicide attacks against targets in the United States. Two of the planes were flown into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, a third plane hit the Pentagon just outside Washington, DC, and the fourth plane was crashed in a field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania. Often referred to simply as 9/11, the attacks resulted in extensive death and destruction, triggering major US initiatives to combat terrorism. Nearly 3,000 people were killed during the attacks, including more than 400 police officers and firefighters and 246 passengers and crew on the four planes. This was the most deadly terrorist attack in US history.

- The Washington Times, Remembering 9/11

Document 2

Who were the hijackers?

These 19 young men, ages 20 to 33, came from a variety of backgrounds, some wealthy, some poor. Many had college educations, while others dropped out from college or left home to become soldiers on the side of Muslims in Chechnya and Afghanistan. Among them were three sets of brothers. Fifteen were from Saudi Arabia, two from the United Arab Emirates, and one each from Egypt and Lebanon.

- The Washington Times, Remembering 9/11

Document 3

What is Terrorism?

It is difficult to come up with a definition of terrorism with which everyone will agree. The root of the word is "terror" or fear. An act of terrorism seeks to use fear to compel a group of people or a government to act in a certain way in response to violence or the threat of violence. Terrorist acts have been committed by a variety of people representing a wide range of political, religious, cultural or social viewpoints, ranging from lone individuals to large coordinated groups. Generally, a characteristic of terrorism is that the victims are often "civilians," that is people who are not in any way representative of the object of terrorism.

-The Washington Times, Remembering 9/11

Document 5



The Pentagon on 9/11, Washington, DC

Document 4

"We swore that America wouldn't live in security until we live it truly in Palestine. This showed the reality of America, which puts Israel's interest above its own people's interest. America won't get out of this crisis until it gets out of the Arabian Peninsula, and until it stops its support of Israel."

-Osama bin Laden, October 2001

Document 6

"For over half a century, Muslims in Palestine have been slaughtered and assaulted and robbed of their honor and of their property. Their houses have been blasted, their crops destroyed. And the strange thing is that any act on their part to avenge themselves or to lift the injustice befalling them causes great agitation in the United Nations which hastens to call for an emergency meeting only to convict the victim and to censure the wronged and the tyrannized whose children have been killed and whose crops have been destroyed and whose farms have been pulverized."

- Osama bin Laden, May 1998

Document 7

"...We also remember what we learned about the Taliban during its control of Afghanistan, before the U.S.-led invasion back in 2001. This was a place of considerable human rights violations - the soccer stadium scenes we all remember, women being stoned, people being beheaded, music being forbidden, that kind of thing. And of course, they provided sanctuary for al-Qaida and Osama bin Laden. This was the place where 9/11 was plotted."

- Neal Conan, NPR